

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 297356

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELTN, PN

SUBJECT: BOYD-ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY

1. IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST FROM AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA, ARA/PAN OFFICERS MET WITH PANAMA EMBASSY OFFICERS ON DECEMBER 12 TO INFORMALLY DISCUSS SUBJECT HIGHWAY PROBLEM.

2. GOP WANTS TO MOVE QUICKLY TO SECURE NEW AAGREEMENT ON BOYD-ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY CITING CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF ROAD AND NEED TO BEGIN REPAIRS BEFORE RAINY SEASON SETS IN.

3. WE CONCURRED IN NEED FOR ACTION AND STATED POSITION CONTAINED IN EMBASSY NOTE NO. 149 OF NOVEMBER 26, 1975. PANAMANIAN DID NOT HAVE COPY OF NOTE AND WERE UNAWARE OF ITS CONTENTS. AFTER READING A COPY WE PROVIDED, THEY GAVE GENERAL EXPOSITION OF GOP POSITION WHICH WAS ESSENTIALLY AN INDEFINITE CONTINUATION OF THE 1950 HIGHWAY AGREEMENT. KEY POINTS OF PANAMANIAN PRESENTATION WERE (A) U.S. WOULD
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CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE HIGHWAY AND REHABILITATE OR

REBUILD IT AS NECESSARY; (B) PANAMA WOULD CONTINUE TO

ALLOW FREE ACCESS; (C) DURATION OF AGREEMENT WOULD BE OPEN-ENDED WITH EITHER/BOTH PARTIES HAVING OPTION TO TERMINATE AFTER SUFFICIENT NOTIFICATION; (D) PERMANENT JOINT HIGHWAY COMMISSION WOULD BE REESTABLISHED WITH SAME COMPOSITION AS FORMER ONE, BUT ALL MEETINGS MUST BE HELD IN REPUBLIC OF PANAMA.

4. PANAMANIAN ARGUED THAT DE FACTO CONTINUATION OF 1950 AGREEMENT WOULD BE IN U.S. INTEREST, I.E. THAT U.S. FREE ACCESS RIGHTS TO BOYD-ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY AND ALL OTHER ROADS IN REPUBLIC OF PANAMA BASED ON ARTICLE 7 OF AGREEMENT. FYI: ARA/PAN JUDGED FORUM AND TIMING INAPPROPRIATE TO BRING UP OTHER AGREEMENTS WHICH GUARANTEE FREE U.S. ACCESS.

5. RESPONDING TO POINT RAISED IN EMBASSY NOTE NO. 149, PANAMANIAN SAID IT MIGHT BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT FOR GOP TO INSTITUTE CONTROLS ON ROAD TRAFFIC, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE 1950 AGREEMENT HAD MADE NO PROVISIONS FOR TRAFFIC CONTROLS.

6. IN REPLY TO QUESTION, PANAMANIAN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THEIR PRESENTATION WAS NOT NECESSARILY THE DEFINITIVE GOP POSITION, BELIEVED FORMAL GOP RESPONSE WOULD BE ALONG SAME LINES.

7. PANAMA EMBASSY OFFICIALS WILL TRY TO EXPEDITE FORMAL RESPONSE IN PANAMA. BECAUSE OF AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ-REVILLA'S INTEREST, PLEASE KEEP DEPARTMENT INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS. INGERSOLL

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